UNBRIDLED: THE HORSES OF GÉRICAULT'S ENGLISH SUITE

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

In 1819, following the unenthusiastic reception of his *Raft of the Medusa*, Théodore Géricault experienced a period of physical and psychological illness that ultimately led him to England, where he created an important series of lithographs entitled "Various Subjects Drawn from Life and on Stone," today known as the English Suite. Géricault had initially explored the series' medium—lithography—and one of its major subjects—horses—in close collaboration with Horace Vernet over the course of the 1810s. This thesis argues that the English Suite breaks decisively with both the conception of lithography and image of the horse that he had once shared with Vernet.

In England, Géricault found a country with a long tradition of using prints for social commentary and a recent concern with the effects of industrialization and urban growth on the lives of the less fortunate. Interest in horses also flourished there, as evinced by a rich and active tradition of equine imagery and new concerns with the ethical treatment of horses in an industrial setting. In this context, Géricault was able to envision a distinctively new type of lithograph that combined his love of horses with a critique of the social ills besetting England at a moment of rapid urban and industrial growth. He enjoyed commercial success with a series of prints completely unprecedented in France and utterly different from the imagery he had developed with Vernet.

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CHAPTER ONE: Géricault, Vernet, and the Horse

The works of Théodore Géricault and Horace Vernet reveal a shared a passion for horses, military life, and the drama of modernity. As is well-known, the horse played a substantial role in Géricault's works on these subjects. In fact, the horse was a central motif in both Géricault and Vernet's art, and they explored it together in their early careers. When the two artists began working in the medium of lithography, their use of the horse to compliment modern themes, such as Napoleonic veterans, continued to be visible and often collaborative. However, this thesis explores a moment when Géricault departed from Vernet's influence and began to utilize the horse in his lithographs in a way that was completely his own.

This essay argues that during his time in England, from 1821 to 1823, Géricault developed a conception of the horse that was entirely distinct and even opposed to Vernet's, particularly in the extensive lithographic series titled *Various Subjects Drawn from Life and on Stone*, now known as the English Suite. This series depicts horses in new contexts like industrial labor and urban poverty, and it endows horses with especially unnerving, apparently human emotions. Rather than portraying horses as attributes of military or sporting scenes, Géricault used them as a means of evoking spiritual and physical suffering under the conditions of modernity.

Géricault was first introduced to horses as a child on an estate owned by his mother's family in Mortain.[1] This began his lifelong affinity for the animals. Throughout his life, he rode for pleasure and sport, and in his art, he depicted horses more than any other

[1] Charles Clement, *Géricault. Étude biographique et critique avec le catalogue raisonné* (Paris: Librarie académique, 1879), 14-18.

motif, with the exception of humans. From his earliest paintings displayed at the Salon to the English Suite, one of the last major projects he completed before his death, the theme of the horse is not only present, but essential. His death was also hastened as the result of a riding accident. In 1822, after his return from England, he was thrown from his horse, causing an injury to his spine that decimated his already poor health. Had he taken the time to recover properly, Géricault may have lived longer, but he continued to ride. A second collision with another rider at a race caused an abscess at the site of his original spinal injury to burst. The resulting infection ultimately proved fatal.[2]

From the outset of his career, Géricault's artistic milieu was filled with artists who shared his love of horses. This began in 1808 under the tutelage of Carle Vernet, often described as the premier horse painter of his day.[3] Carle Vernet's horses tend to be lithe, elegant creatures with elongated necks and completely erect postures, depicted with gracefully curving lines. Some of Géricault's work reveals an ability to render similarly delicate creatures. For example, in the lithograph *An Arabian Horse* (fig.1), the fine, scooping nose and petite features of the horse recall those found in early prints by Carle Vernet (fig.2). Yet Géricault's own affinity for more weighty, virile, muscular horses, rippling with uncontrollable energy and depicted with forceful lines or brushstrokes in monumental compositions separated much of his work from that of his first master. Géricault's awareness of what distinguished his work from Carle Vernet's is evident in

[2] Lorenz Eitner, *Géricault, His Life and Work* (London: Orbis Publishing, 1983), 239-40.
[3] Ibid, 14-16.

words he spoke upon leaving Carle Vernet's studio for that of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin: "One of my horses would have devoured six of his."[4]

It was in Carle Vernet's studio that Géricault first met Carle's son, Horace (hereinafter "Vernet"), thus beginning a personal and professional relationship that would last until the end of Géricault's life. In many respects, he and Vernet had very different careers. Vernet, an art insider, came from a line of successful artists and quickly made a name for himself as painter of military and genre scenes.[5] Géricault, on the other hand, was discouraged early on by his father from becoming an artist but, because of an inheritance from his mother, was able to pursue his art without concern for financial support.[6] Vernet met with almost immediate public success, whereas Géricault's art went largely unappreciated by the public throughout his career. Despite these differences in their circumstances and careers, Géricault and Vernet were drawn to one another by their mutual love of horses and their desire to capture the excitement and hardship of military life.[7]

In Paris during the early 19th century there was no shortage of such themes from which Géricault and Vernet could draw. Despite Napoleon's recent defeat and the subsequent Bourbon Restoration, the glory and suffering of the Napoleonic campaigns were still alive in collective memory. The era was punctuated by uprisings and continued unrest among those dissatisfied with the Bourbon government and veterans forced onto

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[4] Phillippe Grunchec, *Géricault's Horses: Drawings and Watercolors* (New York: The Vendome Press, 1984), 6.
[5] Beatrice Farwell, *The Charged Image: French Lithographic Caricature, 1816-1848* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1989) 178.
[6] Klaus Berger, *Géricault and his Work,* trans. Winslow Ames (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1955) 63.
[7] Eitner, *Géricault, His Life and Work,* 41-48.

half-pay. The Greek struggle for independence and a rebellion in South America against Spanish rule further fueled existing tensions between liberals and conservatives in Paris.[8] Both Vernet and Géricault were sensitive to these issues and events and worked on subjects that directly reflected the struggles of Napoleonic veterans and the unstable political climate in the city.

Vernet, a known freemason and Bonapartist, used some of his paintings to express liberal sympathies and to show support for the exiled emperor. Vernet's *The Atelier* (fig.3), for example, depicts a number of known Bonapartists gathered in his studio in Montmartre.[9] Although the exact nature of his politics has been debated, Géricault also showed an interest in political commentary delivered through military scenes. In 1819-20 he worked on a commission for four lithographs depicting the Latin American rebellion against Spain. A work in support of the rebellion and its leaders was perceived as a statement against the absolute power represented by the Bourbon regime.[10] Before his time in England, Géricault also completed several lithographs addressing the hardships faced by Napoleonic veterans upon their return from the campaigns. These prints evince a sympathy for Bonapartists not unlike Vernet's.

Military subjects and the plight of Napoleonic veterans appealed to Géricault and Vernet because of their political commitments, but they were clearly also drawn to these themes because of the opportunity they offered to incorporate the horse. This is evident in each artist's debut at the Salon of 1812. Géricault's *Charging Chasseur* and Vernet's *Taking*

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[8]Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Liberals of the World Unite: Géricault, His Friends, and *La Liberté des Peuples,*" *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 116 (1990): 227-231.
[9]Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Imago Belli: Horace Vernet's L'Atelier as an Image of Radical Militarism under the Restoration," *The Art Bulletin* 68:2 (1986): 268-273.
[10]Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Liberals of the World Unite," 227, and 231-234.

of a Fortified Encampment near Glatz both prominently feature horses. Two other early paintings reveal similarities between the artists. Géricault's *Wounded Cuirassier* (fig.4) and Vernet's *Wounded Trumpeter* (fig.5) both depict an injured rider accompanied by an anxious mount. Rich colors and tonal contrasts highlight the fine materials of the military costumes and emphasize the horses. The drama in each work is heightened by the allusion to a battle raging in the distance or just outside the frame. Their brushy, loose quality evokes something of the dust and smoke of battle filling the air. Most importantly for our purposes, the horses embody the atmospheric tension through their posture and expressions.

In Vernet's, the horse refuses to leave its rider's side, despite the nearby battle. This notion of loyalty is reinforced through the inclusion of the dog at the soldier's head. Vernet's painting also pushes the boundaries of a believable physical space: the figures are forced close together and tucked into an awkward corner of a building at the edge of the battlefield; the horse hovers, as if weightless, over his fallen rider. The horse does not make eye contact with the viewer, and instead looks with visible concern at the fallen soldier. The horse's gesture points the viewer back toward the human subject, and the dog that licks the man's cheek and the homely, thatched building situates the scene more in the realm of the anecdotal than the heroic.

Despite the similarities between Géricault's and Vernet's work, subtle differences in the artists' approaches are already apparent. In Géricault's composition, the soldier and horse slip down a steep embankment, suspended together in an impossible space. The soldier holds his frantic mount with a single hand, implying a powerful bond of trust between man and horse. The manipulations of the physical space and the soldier's ability to

restrain his horse seem intentionally exaggerated; Géricault's utilizes the contrived closeness between them to emphasize the intimate nature of their relationship. In the composition, Géricault employs the horse to evoke an intensity of emotion that the soldier alone could not.[11] The horse, with its wild mane and foam soaked lips, stares out at the viewer with one wild eye. The effect is unsettling, and casts the horse itself as the possible subject of the composition.[12]

The relationship between soldiers and horses was a theme that both Géricault and Vernet often explored in their work. At times, Géricault even drew on Vernet's compositions for inspiration. This is evident in Géricault's painting *Mounted Hussar Trumpeter* (fig. 6), from 1819 or 1820. As Christopher Sells has pointed out, the painting quotes Vernet's earliest published lithograph from 1816 of a mounted lancer (fig. 7). Each work depicts a soldier from behind, mounted on horseback, and dressed in military finery. The compositions are so similar that, save for slight variations in the figure's costume, Géricault's painting could be the same soldier captured from a different angle.[13]

Vernet's lithograph showcases a knack for quick and assured handling. The print retains the spontaneity of a sketch while still appearing to be a polished composition. In the scene, the soldier and his horse are depicted in a moment of cautious relaxation. The overt intimacy between man and animal in Vernet's *Wounded Trumpeter* is less apparent, but the

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[11] Philippe Bordes, "L'Ecurie don't je ne sortirai que cousu d'or: Painters and Printmaking from David to Géricault," In *Théodore Géricault, the Alien Body: Tradition in Chaos*, ed. Serge Guilbaut et al. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1997), 131.
[12] Stefan Germer has made a careful discussion of the effect of Géricault's horses, dubbing the alien gaze of their eye-contact "uncanny," and citing it as one of the things that lends Géricault's horses their uniquely chilling impact.
[13]Christopher Sells, "New Light on Géricault, his Travels and his Friends, 1816-23," *Apollo* 292 (1986): 390-395.

pair looks at ease with one another. Vernet provides little detail about the figures' surroundings: there is a second soldier on horseback in the distance, but only the hint of topography is shown. Vernet makes no allusion to any battle in the vicinity. In place of a significant narrative, Vernet pays careful attention to the details of the soldier's costume and the horse's tack, as well as to the fine handling of the horse's body and profile. This suggests that the print was meant to be a study of the horse and rider.

Géricault's painting, in contrast, insinuates a narrative. The setting is less ambiguous and there are clear indications of a nearby battle. Horse and rider stand at the ready, waiting for a signal to engage with the enemy. The positioning of Géricault's figures also differs from Vernet's. Géricault's soldier and horse are still in profile, but the horse's head is turned further away from the viewer, in the direction of the battle. The horse stares ahead and pricks its ears towards the fray, just out of sight and over the hill. Through the horse, Géricault creates interest and tension in the narrative by suggesting that the animal has a consciousness of its own that is analogous to the human's.

Géricault almost certainly drew his inspiration for his painting from Vernet's *Mounted Lancer*.[14] Géricault's work, however, pushes at the limits of Vernet's print. In the latter, the horse can be understood as one of the soldier's accoutrements, a necessary accessory, like the soldier's cap or uniform. In Géricault's work, the glimpse of battle signals that the image is more than an equestrian portrait or a study of military life. The pose or bearing of the horse's body, which is angled towards the battle, suggests vigilance, as if the horse is preparing itself for battle just as much as the soldier. Thus, Géricault's image posits man and beast as more equal subjects.

[14] Ibid, 390-395.

As his work developed, Géricault placed the horse more frequently at the center of his compositions, where it often embodied key meanings and became capable of projecting keen emotion that blurred the line between human and animal experience. Vernet, on the other hand, tended to use the horse more as a necessary attribute of hunt or battle pictures. Vernet's horses are sweet or docile creatures, always remaining firmly rooted in their status as animals.[15]

[15]This is evident in Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer's discussion of Vernet's use of the horse in his *Atelier*. The animal, an actual horse known as *Le Regent*, was used as a model for at least one of Vernet's compositions, *The Battle of Montmirail*. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer's has argued that *Le Regent* was meant to recall the exiled Napoleon due to its resemblance to the Emperor's own horse, Vizir. Vernet uses his horse to represent the greater concept of Bonaparte and all that the emperor represented to Vernet's liberal friends. The horse, while in some ways presented as an equal to the other men who have had their portraits painted, is still just a horse. It does not create any meaning in and of itself, but instead operates as a symbol of Napoleon's and Vernet's political ideals. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer draws attention to the fact that the horse has been included in the "key" that Vernet provides to identify all of the individuals in the painting. The horse is named and given a rather prominent spot, all things that point its importance within the composition.

CHAPTER TWO: Géricault and Vernet's Early Lithographic Work

Géricault and Vernet recognized the value of lithography early on as a versatile medium that allowed them to render subjects with ease, and they utilized it to develop their skills as artists. With its relatively easy production process and capacity for virtually unlimited copes, lithography lent itself to both commercial and political uses, which Vernet saw and capitalized on. Géricault viewed it as a medium especially appropriate for capturing scenes of modern life, its suffering and its triumphs. In his lithographs, the horse began to take center stage and, while he continued working closely with Vernet, the distinctions between his and Vernet's works became more marked.

Géricault published his first lithograph in 1817, just twenty years after the process was first invented in Germany by Aloys Senefelder as a cost-effective and efficient alternative to traditional methods of printing.[16] In 1816, with the establishment of Charles le Comte de Lasteyrie's shop and Godefroy Engelmann's shortly thereafter, the technology arrived in Paris. That same year, Engelmann put together an album of lithographs, including some by Carle Vernet, which was aimed at demonstrating the value of the new process.[17] It was through his father that Horace Vernet was first introduced to the medium, producing Paris's first commercially published lithograph (fig.7) in 1816.[18] Géricault picked up the new process soon after, when he moved next door to the Vernets upon his return from Italy in 1817.[19] Vernet and Géricault worked together on at least one lithograph,

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[16] Kate Spencer, *The Graphic Art of Géricault* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1969), 5.
[17] James Cuno, "Retour de Russie: Géricault and Early French Lithography," *Théodore Géricault, the Alien Body,* 146.
[18] Beatrice Farwell, *The Charged Image,* 178.
[19] James Cuno, "Retour de Russie: Géricault and Early French Lithography," 146-147.

Géricault's *Swiss Guard at the Louvre* (fig.8).[20] This, and the fact that the two artists had already enjoyed a close working relationship, makes it likely that Vernet had a hand in the Géricault's introduction to lithography.

Like Vernet's, Géricault's first print, *Roman Butchers* (fig.9), also depicts a man mounted on horseback. In both prints, the artists offered few details about the setting or landscape, preferring instead to focus on the central horse and rider. Both prints reveal that the artists were still learning the medium: the shading is uneven and lines are broken where the lithographic crayon did not adhere perfectly to the stone. The artists soon became adept at the new medium and capable of producing works with finely finished lighting and shading effects. Initially, however, Vernet and Géricault both utilized simpler, sketch-like lines. In their early works, the shading is minimal and individual lines thick. These qualities remained in Vernet's prints throughout his career; he preferred quick lines that lent his compositions a lightness and sense of movement. Géricault's works, however, became more compositionally complex and technically ambitious as time went on.

Géricault's first lithograph is packed with the energy and movement of man and beast. The scene depicts a man poised on a rearing horse amongst a herd of running bulls. His horses possess a greater weight and presence than those in Vernet's composition. The body of Géricault's horse creates a dramatic central focus around which the rest of the action flows. Unlike Vernet, who focused on rendering the soldier and his attributes, Géricault foregoes depicting the rider's face and instead develops the profile, hooves, and tack of the horse. Géricault's horse is virile, active, and heroic. In comparison, Vernet's

[20]Clement indicates that Géricault drew the figures in the print, but that Vernet completed the view of the Tuileries in the background, 211.

horse appears docile, dwarfed by the splendor of his rider's ensemble.

The comparison of the artists' earliest lithographs demonstrates that they were still drawn to similar subjects, but the subtle differences in their earlier use of the horse have now become more apparent. Their choice and treatment of subjects began to reveal their individual approaches to the new medium and their differing motivations. In his prints, Vernet's horses continued to be anecdotal, providing elegance and interest to scenes of battles or sport. But in Géricault's lithographs, the horses strain under burdens or against restraints and demand the viewer's attention.

Géricault's talent as a lithographer was evident from the outset, but his feelings about lithography were mixed.[21] On the one hand, he showed an interest in capitalizing on the potentially lucrative medium, which allowed him to easily capture the sudden moments of high drama. Lithography did not demand the same standards nor carry the same burdens as history painting, with its long line of masters to live up to. Lithography freed Géricault to explore and experiment with unconventional themes and approaches.[22] It provided a welcome relief from rigid tradition and, as his English Suite demonstrates, Géricault found that it could be a useful medium for expressing his unique view of the world. At the same time, though, Géricault condemned the medium as a lowly form of art that he would give up once he established a name for himself. In a letter to his friend Dedreux-Dorcy in February 1821, Géricault said, "I flatter myself that this [lithography] will merely be my advertisement, and that soon as the true connoisseurs have come to know

[21] Philippe Bordes, "L'Ecurie don't je ne sortirai que cousu d'or, 130-31.
[22] Kate Spencer, *The Graphic Art of Géricault*, 8-10.

me they will use me for work worthier of myself."[23] On his deathbed, he again lamented his lack of ambitious paintings, seemingly regretting his time spent on lithography. Throughout his life Géricault vacillated between being at peace with and being opposed to the medium.[24]

These conflicted feelings can be seen in his earliest prints. His contemporary subjects, such as the *Roman Butchers*, are dynamic and fresh, richly anchored in the sights of Géricault's own day. But the composition, with its rearing horse so like the one in David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (1801, *Château de Malmaison*), still looks to traditional sources for authority. Géricault was drawn to the spontaneity of lithography, but he felt compelled to elevate the medium. He often did this through subjects that offered a political or social commentary and through the powerful and idealized bodies of his horses, as was the case with his first print.

Vernet's relationship with lithography was less complicated. While he was interested in politically charged subjects and scenes that included social commentary, he also worked on a variety of other commercial projects early in his career. These other projects included a series of fashion plates and an extensive lithographic series on the specifics of sword fighting.[25] Vernet did not seem to struggle with the baseness of the medium in the same way that Géricault did. The spontaneous, sketch-like quality he often employed points to Vernet's ease with lithography to render genre scenes, vignettes, and portraits.

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[23] Lorenz Eitner, *Géricault, His Life and Work,* 216.
[24] Ibid, 131-32.
[25] Aileen Ribeiro, Introduction to *Horace Vernet 1789-1863. Incroyables et merveilleuses* (London: Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, 1991), 5-10 and Beatrice Farwell, *The Charged Image: French Lithographic Caricature, 1816-1848,* 179.

Despite Géricault's apparently conflicted feelings toward lithography, he produced and sold several prints while in Paris. Cuno has observed that Géricault's prints did not do as well as those by other artists like Vernet on the market, perhaps because of Géricault's choice of weightier subjects.[26] Given Géricault's desire to elevate lithography, this seems a reasonable conclusion. However, the lack of success does not seem to have encouraged Géricault to change his choice and handling of subjects to more resemble prints by Vernet. Instead, Géricault's lithographs became more ambitious and challenging as his career progressed.

Despite the artists' differing feelings about lithography and the varying amounts of success they enjoyed with the medium, they maintained a close working relationship in the years before Géricault's departure for London. On at least one occasion they even worked together on the same lithograph. This occurred, according to Clement, on Géricault's 1819 lithograph noted above, *The Swiss Guard at the Louvre* (fig.8), which depicts a one-legged veteran of the Napoleonic wars clashing with a Swiss Royal Guard. Clement asserts that Vernet drew the background portion of the lithograph where the architecture of the Tuileries is visible.[27]

There has been some suggestion that this indicates Géricault's unfamiliarity with the medium, which required Vernet to assist him in finishing the drawing. Its seems possible, however, that Géricault was bored by the more technical details of architecture and passed the lithograph on to Vernet after he had finished rendering the interesting and tense

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[26]James Cuno demonstrates that even the prints that Géricault was able to sell did not earn him that much money. Géricault was offered 100 francs for the stone on which he had drawn his *Return from Russia*, but the stone alone had cost more than half that, 154.
[27] Clement, *Géricault*, 211.

human interaction in the foreground.[28] This collaboration provides another example of how closely Géricault and Vernet worked together, but it also shows where Géricault's interests truly lay. The deep, psychological drama that drew Géricault to modern subjects was also what made him unable or unwilling to create lithographs that remained in the realm of the anecdotal, even if this detracted from their commercial appeal. The divergence from Vernet that Géricault's early lithographic works hint at reaches a defining moment during his time in England. The resulting lithographic suite represents the culmination of Géricault's lifelong interest in the horse as a motif that could bear and express the weight of the modern subjects that he was drawn to.

[28] Kate Spencer presents this argument in Graphic Work of Géricault, however, it seems misguided given the fact that Géricault was capable enough to render the bodies of the two main figures in detail, down to the patches on the veteran's coat and the filigree on the guard's hat. Furthermore, the work by Géricault's hand is more even and consistent than that of Vernet's. The two main figures are made up of even, steady line work. And the background area done by Vernet did not require any exceptional talent or technique. Instead of indicating that Géricault relied on Vernet out of ignorance on how to proceed, this lithograph points to differences in the artists' interests and techniques that manifested early on, 14-15.

CHAPTER THREE: The English Suite

The English Suite includes highly finished lithographs printed between February and May 1821 by Charles Hullmandel. Their sale and distribution was handled by publishers Rodwell and Martin.[29] Géricault completed the prints while living in London, where he had traveled by invitation from the gallery owner William Bullock to display his *Raft of the Medusa* to the British public. After the Salon of 1819, where his *Medusa* was not received as well as he would have liked, there is some evidence that Géricault suffered a breakdown from exhaustion and mental stress.[30] At that time, he considered traveling to the Orient, but changed his mind when offered the chance to make money and gain recognition from the exhibition of the *Medusa*.[31] Géricault was no doubt also drawn to England because of Britain's deeply ingrained equestrian culture, which he would have been familiar with, having traveled there with Vernet in 1819.

All but one of the prints in the suite involve horses. Similarly, all of the prints, with the exception *An Arabian Horse*, depict scenes from life in London. The lithographs include some acknowledgement of the world of the elite, but the focus is largely on the lives of the poor and working class in the city.[32] Of the prints, three portray the very poorest of society, three show the labor of farriers of various nationalities, and three depict draft horses engaged in heavy labor. The final three prints, although they seem to resist classification,

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[29] Martha Bauder Powell, *Géricault in England: The Lithographic Print and the Social World of Men and Horse,* (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1999), 9.
[30] Lorenz Eitner, *Géricault, His Life and Work*, 201-6.
[31] Ibid, 209.
[32] Powell discusses the way the focus of the prints is largely on the lives of the working class. Even the prints that depict more elite aspects of life (horses exercising, a party of life guards) depict the working class and how their labor is what enables the lives of the elite to go on without noticing such efforts, 11-13.

have been loosely categorized by Eitner as "the beauty of high-bred horses," and by Alec Mishory as "Horses and Their Tenders."[33] They include the prints entitled *Horses Exercising* (fig.10)*, An Arabian Horse* (fig.1)*, and A Party of Life Guards* (fig.11).[34]

Géricault's desire to incorporate the lofty aspirations of his paintings like the *Medusa* as well as the urgent relevance of modernity into his lithographs is present in the series from beginning to end. And when compared to several of Vernet's contemporary lithographs, the English Suite makes clear the extent to which Géricault was diverging from his friend's example. That is not to say, however, that Géricault and Vernet no longer shared any similarities; on the contrary, there were times when Vernet traded his more fashionable subjects of sport and battle to treat subjects more along the lines of what Géricault was producing in London. For example, some of Vernet's prints do feature lowly figures like beggars and criminals, but a close comparison between the two artists demonstrates that their approaches to similar subjects had almost entirely diverged by the time Géricault was in London.

As was the case with their early careers, their differences are most evident in their use of the horse. Géricault utilizes the horse in thoughtful portrayals of suffering, hard labor, and poverty, and, while in his earlier works the horses seem to vie for the role of main subject, in many of the prints in the series, their role as the protagonists becomes undeniable. In that way, the English Suite is entirely different from Vernet's anecdotal

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[33] Alec Mishory, "Théodore Géricault's *Grande suite anglaise*: Sources Iconography and Significance," (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1997), 91-93. Mishory further divides the categories, separating the three prints out into: "horses in military use," "Horses groomed for riding," and "Horses and their tenders classified according to their countries of origins."
[34] Ibid, 92.

vignettes where the horses are supporting characters to the main event. These aspects of the English Suite are visible even in the series' frontispiece (fig.12). The lithograph depicts a heavy, horse-drawn wagon, followed by a man holding a sign that reads, "Shipwreck of the Meduse." The implication of the scene is that the wagon carries Géricault's masterpiece to the exhibition in London, which was the explicit reason for his voyage to England.[35] Géricault masterfully sets the tone for the series through this print, tying the whole suite to the grand ambition of his history painting.

The worn and patched man who trails behind the monumental wagon carrying Géricault's great work might be likened to the painting itself. Scuffed and bruised after its poor reception at the Salon, the painting began a long journey in hopes of finding a warmer welcome in England. The shabby wagon, with its tattered curtain, and bedraggled man, although humble, play important roles in that journey. The wagon carries Géricault's masterpiece and the man holds the sign declaring the nature of the valuable cargo. This same sentiment could then, of course, be applied to the album that the frontispiece introduces. Géricault, who had himself entertained lower opinions of the medium and would have been sensitive to such views, asks the viewer to consider that the humble medium has more to offer than one might expect.

Géricault's frontispiece stood in stark contrast to one that Vernet had published just a few years earlier in 1819 (fig.13). Vernet's print was completed for a lithographic series on sword fighting. His scene depicts two soldiers, one standing and one on horseback,

[35] Lorenz Eitner, *Géricault, His Life and Work*, 228.

holding a banner that declares the title of the series.[36] Vernet utilizes the composition mainly to convey information about what the viewer will find in the series. The soldiers in their uniforms and the horse add visual interest, but their main function is to hold up the banner and provide a glimpse of what is to come in the rest of the series. The figures do not refer to Vernet or his experiences in any way even though he had a personal interest in both the military and horses.

In contrast, it is clear that Géricault utilizes his frontispiece to refer to his larger artistic practice and subtly allude to the themes he weaves throughout the series. Géricault's image also suggests the greater resonance that the horse held in his art. The horse in his composition, while only present through a glimpse of its hindquarters and the back of its head, evokes a greater sense of presence and purpose than Vernet's horse. In Géricault's composition, the horse is the vehicle that moves the scene forward. It plods on, bearing the weight of the great tableaux, and Géricault carefully marks its slow progress in the hoof marks left in the ground in its wake. The heavy workhorse hints at what the series holds, and suggests the artist's personal trials. The medium of lithography itself was a source of anxiety for Géricault, and the frontispiece illustrates his perpetual, unresolved struggle over the value of the medium and his status as an artist. In this way, the scene alludes to Géricault's use of lithography, itself on the fringes of high art, to give a central role to figures often ostracized by society within the series.

While in England, Géricault's style also developed and departed further from Vernet's. Eitner has suggested that the watercolor-like qualities that the prints took on may

[36] This frontispiece was made for a lithographic series that was published in both Spanish and French. The image included in this essay is the frontispiece from the Spanish edition. Farwell, 178-9.

have been a result of Géricault's interest in combining aspects of English and French art.[37] In a letter to Vernet, Géricault extolled the virtues of the English School: "The Exhibition just opened has again confirmed in me the belief that color and effect are understood only here."[38] The tone of the letter is exuberant, full of praise for English artists such as Landseer and Wilke. Géricault, it seems, was trying to encourage his friend to expand his talents through the appreciation of what the English could teach the French. The implication of the letter is that Géricault recognized the limits and weaknesses of his own art and, more importantly, of French art as a whole.

In England, Géricault was also captivated by the inspiration that the bustling, gritty streets offered him. In a letter to his friend Dedreux-Dorcy, Géricault wrote "for relaxation [I] wander about the streets which are so full of constant movement and variety that you would never leave them, I'm sure."[39] The desire that Géricault expressed to both emulate the styles of English painting and capture the vigor of the streets can be seen the series. The prints give priority to intense, watercolor-like atmospheric effects and the daily toils of the city. In *The Coal Wagon* (fig.14), for example, Géricault combines the hard and dirty labor of hauling coal with the solemn splendor of the water and sky in the background. Because of the setting and the highly-finished nature of the lithograph, this common activity takes on a feeling of greater importance; the lowly coal wagon becomes worthy of art.

Géricault is also sensitive to tonal effects in the prints. The horses that pull the coal

[37] Eitner, *Géricault, His Life and Work,* 231.
[38]Ibid*,* 216-218.
[39]Ibid*,* 215.

wagon transition from the lightest at the head of the team, to the darkest at the back.[40] He places the lightest horses against the darkest portion of the landscape, and vice-versa, highlighting the intensity of the sky. This compositional strategy not only creates a pleasing visual swoop, it also serves to emphasize the horses' difficult labor. As the eye moves from the lightest horse to the darkest, it comes to rest on the wagon, poised at the top of the steep slope. The horses lean noticeably back into their hindquarters, bracing themselves for the added weight of their load on the decline.

The horses and their work are the focus of the scene. Even the work of the two men in the composition points back to the animals as they are occupied with guiding the team. Such work was grueling for the men and the animals; if a single horse spooked or stepped badly it could prove fatal to everyone.[41] Géricault's composition, and the care he gives to the light and shading, are meant to speak to the realities of that hard labor while simultaneously elevating it to the realm of history painting, a genre that did not necessarily fit with the meanness of the work itself. The horses, ennobled with muscular bodies worthy of the most studied *académies,* stand out in their barren surroundings and continually draw the focus back to themselves.

In Vernet's 1818 lithograph, *Mail Coach* (fig.15), a large portion of the composition is also devoted to the horses depicted in the scene. It is clear, however, that the subject of the

[40] Throughout the entire series, Géricault pays careful attention to such color contrasts between his horses. In many of the compositions, he pairs a light horse with a dark horse to increase visual interest or otherwise enhance the scenes.
[41] Draft horses, like the ones shown in Géricault's print, are known as cold-blooded, and they are bred to be strong, docile, and steady. This makes them ideal for pulling heavy, dangerous loads and carriages full of people. Hot-blooded horses, such as Arabians and Thoroughbreds, on the other hand, are much more temperamental and flighty. Such horses would not have been trustworthy for drawing a loaded wagon along a steep, ocean cliff on a windy day.

print is the men and their work, rather than the horses. The lithograph portrays a group of French postilions changing weary horses for a fresh team at a post-house.[42] Throughout Europe, postilions were men that rode at the head of a team of horses to better control and guide the animals. The various objects Vernet that includes in the scene emphasize the men's profession and would have made the subject easily recognizable to contemporary viewers. The lead horse in each team is saddled as well as harnessed, something that would only have occurred if the horses were to be ridden. Beside the man adjusting the harness is a pair of heavy boots specially made to protect a postilion's legs from being pinned by the wooden tongue of the coach.[43]

The horses being swapped out for a new team appear tousled and travel-worn after their work. Their manes are in disarray and their tails have begun to come out of their plaits; one horse lifts its back foot as if it picked up a stone along the road. The fresh horses being hitched to the coach shift their weight, test their bits, and pull at their reins in impatience or boredom. The animals are non-descript and more-or-less the same, save for slight variations in their coloring. Their foolish, docile faces recall none of the elegance or heroism that can be found in the strong, arched necks and sculpted muscles of Géricault's horses. In short, Vernet's horses are just horses, realistic and down to earth.

Vernet represents the horses in the context of their labor, and even renders them in realistic, factual detail, but he does not focus on the larger reality of what that work cost

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[42] It is clear from Vernet's depiction of the postilions' costumes that they are in France. Postilions in England wore a distinctive costume of their own, which included a short jacket, white hat, and a yellow pearl-buttoned waistcoat. Géricault's *The White Horse Tavern* also depicts a postilion that is definitively located in France (the signboard is in French) and the costume of Géricault's postilion matches that of Vernet's. See, Fairman Rogers, *A Manual of Coaching,* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1901), 274-284.
[43] Ibid, 274-284.

either the men or the animals. In truth, the labor was extremely demanding for the postilions, who worked long hours with very few breaks. For the horses as well, it was miserable, back-breaking labor that often hastened their deaths.[44] Despite this, the overall tone of Vernet's print is lighthearted and pleasant. The sketchy, spontaneous quality of his drawing adds to the sense that this scene is meant to be enjoyed. The treatment of the horses themselves, with their expressions that do not register the harshness of their work, and their jaunty, tousled appearances, further contributes to the anecdotal feeling of the print. The closest that Vernet gets to depicting the suffering associated with urban life in *Mail Coach* is the couple shown begging at the far-right corner of the print. The woman in the coach takes pity on the paupers and drops a coin into one of the beggar's hands. The couple is marginal to the action, squeezed into the edge of the composition, and easy to miss. In this context, it is clear that "suffering" is being handled more as an abstract concept, just another detail that adds visual interest, rather than an as intentional theme.

When Vernet did choose to make darker themes the central subject of his prints, the compositions seem to lack the psychological depth that can be found in Géricault's. In Vernet's *The Convicts* (fig.17), for example, he depicts convicted felons sitting on the docks, waiting to be loaded into ships just visible in the background. The prisoners are numbered and marked with the word GAL, short for *galérien*, a criminal condemned to work at the oar.[45] The human chattel are chained together and await their fate with contempt or woe in their faces; the faint shapes of the ships in the background hint at the hard labor that they

[44] Diana Donald, "Beastly Sights': the treatment of animals as a moral theme in representations of London c.1820-1850," *Art History* 22:4 (1999): 524-526.
[45]Lionel Casson, "Galley Slaves," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 97 (1966): 35–44.

will face. At first the print appears to set a distinctly different tone than Vernet's anecdotal take on the paupers in his *Mail Coach*. However, the exaggerated and varied expressions of the men recall the silly expressions of Vernet's horses, one man grimaces and covers his ears against the raucous of the docks, another man sits staring dolefully ahead, his head in his hand. In the end, the print creates interest through the entertaining and expressive convicts, it does not attempt to account for real suffering or make a larger social claim.

In contrast, Géricault's lithographs have a documentary quality that suggest that there was no need to exaggerate or embellish the struggles he witnessed in the streets of London. In *A Paraleytic* [sic] *Woman* (fig.16), for example, an unfortunate woman's suffering, and the authentic, unvarnished horror that she causes those who see her, is the subject of the composition. The print depicts a mentally ill woman being rolled in a makeshift wheelchair by an uncaring attendant.[46] A young girl, holding tight to the hand of a small child, who in turn clutches a toy horse, looks back over her shoulder to stare in fear or disgust at the disturbing, chair-bound figure. There is no sense that Géricault overstated the figures expressions to give the scene more flair. Instead, he let the stark facts of the event speak for themselves.

The role of the horse is less central in this scene, but Géricault still utilizes it to reinforce the severity of the woman's suffering. As has been noted by Philippe Grunchec, the horse-drawn vehicle in the background that appears to be a carriage is in fact a

[46] Alec Mishory has demonstrated that, contrary to popular thought, the woman in the chair is more likely a mentally ill woman than a prostitute ravaged by syphilis. He argues that she is both paralyzed and insane, citing the fact that she appears to be wearing a straightjacket, 179-181.

hearse.[47] As is the case with the frontispiece of the series, all that can be seen of the horses in this print are their hindquarters, but they are significant because of the work they do in the scene: pulling a vehicle that foreshadows the woman's imminent death. The toy horse under the arm of the child also seems to be endowed with symbolic significance. The little girl's pristine curls and the carefully cradled toy have a romantic, beauty-amid-ugliness air about them which makes the woman's suffering seem even more tragic.

The toy horse also points up the way that different worlds—the rich and the poor, man and beast—collided in London's streets. The horse is the perfect animal to highlight such a convergence, as it was able to move through and be at home in various settings and social classes. Here as elsewhere, Géricault creates parallels between society's most marginalized figures. These connections then translate into larger meanings, both in the individual prints and in the series as a whole, especially given Géricault's sensitivity to how lithography itself was marginalized in the world of fine art.

Géricault's desire to layer meanings in his prints is particularly visible in *Pity the Sorrows of a Poor Old Man* (fig.18), which depicts the miserable moments of a beggar's life, as he sits starving beneath an open bakery window. In the scene Géricault does more than just document a moment that one might have witnessed in London. Rather, he uses the composition to bring together vastly disparate worlds in order to comment on the asymmetrical distributions of power and status in an urban society on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution. Among the figures pictured are the poor beggar, who is overlooked by the bakery workers; the horses, who were so often ignored and overworked by those

[47] Philippe Grunchec, *Master Drawings by Géricault* (Washington D.C.: International Exhibitions Foundation, 1985), 169.

going about their business; and the distant church, which seems to turn a blind eye to all the suffering in the city streets. Within the same scene, Géricault stresses the importance of companionship. A dog places a concerned paw on the knee of the beggar, and the street sweeper walks beside the lead draft, leaning in as if to speak an encouraging word.[48] In the margins of the lithograph Géricault also sketched two horses, standing close together, one resting its head on the other's back.[49] In fact, Géricault took care to incorporate animals and people together in each lithograph of his English Suite. Even the one lithograph that doesn't include horses, *The Piper* (fig.19), depicts a small dog standing loyally behind his master. This attention to themes like companionship and suffering, which work to simultaneously highlight and reinforce each other, is of one aspect of the prints that sets them distinctly apart Vernet's. One can imagine that, had Géricault remade Vernet's *The Convicts*, he would have drawn a parallel between the prisoners and the animals by including a team of drafts, chained like chattel to their heavy loads.

Two aspects of the English Suite depart from its emphasis on the difficult conditions that humans and beasts endured in industrializing Britain. First, as noted earlier, three of the prints—*A Party of Life Guards*, *An Arabian Horse,* and *Horses Exercising*—depict horses as they were more usually portrayed; that is, as finely bred animals in scenes of the military or sporting life. Second, the horses in all of the prints in the English Suite are magnificent

[48] Lynn R. Matteson demonstrates that the workers in the background are, in fact, street sweepers. She also provides evidence that Géricault expanded on this theme once he was back in Paris. Lynn R. Matteson, "Géricault and English 'Street Cries,'" Apollo, 188 (1977): 304-307.

[49] Not all the prints show this, however, the one included in this paper (fig.18) shows that in the margins of one of the prints Géricault sketched three other scenes, two of horses and one of a street sweeper.

animals, in excellent physical condition and finely groomed. Those that labor in difficult conditions hardly seem to suffer for it.

Previous scholarship has attempted to resolve the first difficulty by separating out the anomalous prints and grouping them together under such rubrics as "the beauty of high-bred horses," or, even more broadly, "horses and their tenders." [50] Indeed, the prints belong under some such heading, but we might also think of them as filling out the various types of horses that exist and the conditions in which they live. Furthermore, these prints allowed Géricault to bridge the distance between the more innovative images in the series and more typical images of horses. As much as they stand apart from the other nine prints in both style and subject matter, they also link the series as a whole to more accepted forms of equestrian art.

All three of the anomalous prints are set apart not simply by their subject matter, but also by their style. *An Arabian Horse*, for example, is the only lithograph that is not squared off; instead, Géricault creates a circular vignette by rounding the edges of the shading. In *A Party of Life Guards*, Géricault leaves much of the sky and background undefined, preferring to focus on the horses and soldiers in the foreground. The print *Horses Exercising* trades the soft, watercolor like effects that Géricault praised in English art, for tight, repetitive line work that emphasizes the lively movement of the horses. Such qualities put Géricault's versatility as a lithographer on display; they emphasize Géricault's ability to work in a variety of stylistic modes.

Despite the stylistic and thematic uniqueness of this group of prints, Géricault

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[50] Alec Mishory, "Théodore Géricault's *Grande suite anglaise*: Sources Iconography and Significance," 91-93 & Lorenz Eitner, *Géricault, His Life and Work*, 228.

connects them to the other prints in a variety of ways. The prints showcase the same notion of companionship that is incorporated throughout the series. In *Horses Exercising*, the horses gallop side-by-side, matching time as if harnessed as a team. Their black and white pairing provides an appealing contrast between their bodies and draws attention to their closeness without hiding their distinctive forms. In *An Arabian Horse*, a man drapes his arm lovingly over the neck of his horse, which stands and looks towards the distant horses. *A Party of Life Guards* depicts two soldiers in the foreground standing at ease and conversing together, despite the boisterous horse behind them. Framed between the soldiers' bodies are the heads of their mounts, bowed together, as if in an intimate conversation of their own. While the subjects of these three prints resembles those taken up by Vernet in his lithography—and we might even consider them as in part a tribute to his friend and former collaborator—ultimately the high finish of the prints, the powerful, elegant bodies of the horses, and their incorporation into the impactful themes of the suite set them apart from Vernet's.

Géricault's decision to idealize his horses—whose muscular, classically beautiful bodies speak more to a life of luxurious care than one of spirit-breaking labor—may also relate to his artistic ambitions for the series. Géricault's decision to endow his horses with idealized bodies seems to have spoken to his fears about the base nature of lithography and his desire to work in a manner associated with ambitious art. In history painting it was expected that heroic subject matter would be conveyed through idealized human bodies. Thus, in his *Raft of the Medusa*, Géricault imagined the survivors as marvelously idealized nudes, even though they had been at sea without food or water for thirteen days and had endured mutinies, fights to the death, and even cannibalism. Bodies derived from classical

nudity were deemed more appropriate to the weighty themes of the painting than starved, dehydrated, sunburned wretches. One can understand the horses in the English Suite in similar terms: Géricault left the beauty of the horses intact in order to emphasize their heroism as beings who endure hardship, overcome adversity, and provide companionship. These themes, combined with Géricault's stylistic ambitions and idealized horses, were what separated his pictures from the less thoughtful and more gratuitously entertaining images that gave lithography its poor reputation.

This use of the idealized horse to elevate the scenes and point up suffering can be seen in *Horses Going to a Fair* (fig.20). The bodies of five horses fill the majority of the composition, while in the remainder heavy clouds and rocky landscape create a sense of tension or foreboding. One of the horses, shown from the side, makes direct eye-contact with the viewer. Two men lead the horses, and the group curves away from the viewer as they begin to climb a sloping, rock lined path. Here, unlike the other prints in the series that emphasize companionship, the horses do not act as partners to the human figures. Instead, Géricault explores their status as commodities, objects headed to market for sale or trade. And yet, in this stark and gloomy portrayal of the outskirts of the city, the horses are beautiful. They embody a positive ideal that provides meaning in the face of adversity. The soot covered cobbles and the bowed backs of the workers look especially hard and grim beside the sensual, undulating lines of the horses' bodies.

Such horses no doubt departed completely from what Géricault would have witnessed in the streets of London, which were full of misused and beaten animals that were worked until their knees broke or they dropped dead. Cruelty to animals had become such a prevalent problem, in fact, that groups began to form in London during the early

1800s to advocate for the rights of animals. Many of these groups focused on the suffering of the horse in particular because its abuse was so visible in the wagon and coach choked streets of London. Lithography provided an excellent resource to these groups that utilized grisly visuals as tools to encourage people to act against animal cruelty.[51]

It is unlikely that such abuses would have eluded Géricault's eye, as he was both an artist and a lifelong horseman, and it is reasonable to presume that he too felt strongly about the humane treatment of animals. The very fact that, in the English Suite, the horses are often depicted as being engaged in heavy labor could be an indication that he was concerned with their plight. However, as is clear from *Horses Going to a Fair,* the animals are not the exhausted and abused knackers that can be found in works that bemoaned the vile treatment of the working horse, such as William Hogarth's *Second Stage of Cruelty* (fig.21), which pulled on viewer's heartstrings and called them to action.[52]

The coats of Géricault's horses are glossy, free from dust and dirt, and their manes are long and free flowing. Even the horses' tails are carefully plaited to keep them away from the filthy streets or from tangling in the heavy equipment. Géricault also consciously depicts a variety of breeds. In the print, there is a dappled Percheron in the lead, as well as a Belgium, a Pinto draft, and even what appears to be a Shetland Pony, half-hidden behind the Pinto's head.[53] If the horses are heavy or plodding, this can only be an indication of

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[51] Diana Donald, "Beastly Sights': the treatment of animals as a moral theme in representations of London c.1820-1850," *Art History* 22:4 (1999): 524-526.
[52] In William Hogarth's print, the horse, which has collapsed from exhaustion and starvation is being beaten cruelly by its master. The horse has tears in its eyes, meant to further increase the pathos and cause viewers to sympathize with the horse.
[53]Fran Lynghaug*, The Official Horse Breeds Standards Guide* (Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 2009), 342-431.

their breed, since draft horses are, by nature, heavy.[54] Despite their bulk, however, the horses do not drag themselves along in a dismal procession. They lift their hooves high up off the ground, their heads are held erect, and their ears are pricked forward on the alert. There is a bold, psychological pull to the measured, calculating, gaze of the Pinto that draws the viewer in and creates a connection with the animal. The wind whipping through the Belgian's mane, and the stoicism of the two lead horses' points to Géricault's consistent interest in elevating modern subjects to the level of the heroic.

As the viewer takes in all the little moments of drama, the greater drama that Géricault develops through his careful treatment of the horse as the subject begins to take shape. The unavoidable gaze of the Pinto suggests that these creatures are individuals with rich internal lives. This realization then clashes against the fact that they have become goods marched off for sale. The Pinto's defiant stare suggests that the animals are privy to their fate and their inability to change it.

Horses Going to a Fair is not unique in this regard. Similar idealization and humanization can be picked out in all of Géricault's English Suite lithographs. In *The Flemish Farrier* (fig.22), Géricault includes a child anxiously reaching up for attention as the horse leans down its massive head to meet the delicate hands of the worrying child.[55] The moment is small, but there is something compelling and maternal in the way the horse reaches down to the child, mane falling over its forehead and neck, like a woman's hair

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[54] Alec Mishory, "Théodore Géricault's *Grande suite anglaise*: Sources Iconography and Significance" (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1997), 124.
[55] The English Suite also includes two other scenes of farriers: *The English Farrier* (fig. 23) and *A French Farrier* (fig. 24). Powell has noted how Géricault uses this grouping to explore social as well as stylistic differences between people of distinct national identities. Powell also makes further observations about the artist's unique representations of companionship in these scenes.

across her shoulders. The way that Géricault has arranged the figures within the composition so that the horse, the boy, and the man form a kind of nuclear family grouping, further enforces the horse's maternal role.[56] Thus, in the prints, the protagonists are not just horses, they are well cared for, idealized figures that command the attention of the viewer through anthropomorphizing elements that defy the realism that otherwise governs the lithographs, scoring them with notes of romantic sentiment while maintaining an air of compelling authenticity. These aspects of the prints, more than any other, reveal Géricault's evolution as an artist, and the ambitious ingenuity that the medium of lithography drew out of him.

[56]Alec Mishory, "Théodore Géricault's *Grande suite anglaise*: Sources Iconography and Significance," 128. Mishory states that the child is actually reaching up to his indifferent father, but given the angles it is impossible to be sure and the child could just as easily be reaching for the horse.

Coda: Géricault After England

In December of 1821, Géricault returned to Paris. In the two remaining years of his life, he completed several more lithographs and paintings, some of which focused on the horse as the main subject. The differences between Géricault and Vernet's lithography which emerged during Géricault's time in London remained visible in his work until his death in 1824. This is once again demonstrable in a comparison between Géricault and Vernet, specifically the works they both completed on the subject of Mazeppa.

Lord Byron's poem, *Mazeppa*, tells the story of a man who fell in love with a married woman, and as punishment for the forbidden affair, was lashed to a horse which was set to run free until it finally fell dead in the land where it was born. It has been noted by numerous scholars that Géricault's own life, with the secret love affair he had with his aunt that resulted in an illegitimate son, shared many parallels to the story Mazeppa. Nonetheless, the theme was popular with many other artists as well, first Delacroix and later Boulanger.[57]

Vernet's take on the subject, entitled *Mazeppa and the Wolves* (fig.25), was completed in 1826 and shown in the Salon the following year. The painting was understood to be charged with political significance. After its exhibition, Vernet's Mazeppa came to stand as a metaphor for the struggles of the Greeks and later with victims of the July Revolution.[58]

In Vernet's image there is a clear narrative moment: Mazeppa, on the horse's back, is being chased wolves. The airy, light depiction of the horse—so unlike the muscled draft in

[57] Patricia Mainardi, "Mazeppa," *Word & Image* 16:4 (2000), 344.
[58]Ibid, 336-38.

Géricault's work—recalls those of Vernet's father. The face and body of the figure lashed to the horse are clear, and the drama is created by Mazeppa's heroic form, which exudes an air of control even as he is carried away on the back of the wildly galloping horse, rather than expressive brush strokes or lightings effects.

In contrast, Géricault's is a small painting that, as Patricia Mainardi has demonstrated, was never meant to be exhibited (fig.25).[59] The image depicts the moment of Byron's poem where the horse, with Mazeppa on its back, heaves itself over the embankment of a river. The loose brushwork and highly contrasting tones lends a dreamlike quality to the work. The fact that Mazeppa's face remains indistinguishable suggests that Géricault wanted the figure to remain a blank canvas onto which a viewer, or the artist himself, could be projected. Mazeppa could be considered the protagonist of the composition, but the horse is the figure that controls and propels the drama forward. Géricault focused more on the burdened and weary animal than he did on the faceless Mazeppa.

This comparison highlights Géricault's continued use of the horse as a central subject in his work. While Vernet utilized the horse as a compliment to the main figure, Géricault's horse once again became the focal point around which the rest of the composition turns. Géricault's horse is ideally beautiful—even though in the story it ran until it dropped dead from exhaustion—its stunning profile and the graceful curve of its neck are not unlike those of the horse in *The Flemish Farrier*. In England, Géricault learned to bring his love of the horse and his interest in modern subjects together in such a way that elevated both, while marrying what he considered to be the best aspects of French and

[59] Patricia Mainardi, "Mazeppa." *Word & Image* 16:4 (2000), 340.

English art. Thus, even though Géricault died seemingly dissatisfied with the time he had wasted on lithography, the effects that his efforts with the medium were still having on his art up to his death suggests that it was far more relevant than he was willing to admit.

FIGURES
All images are by Théodore Géricault unless otherwise indicated.

Figure 1. ***An Arabian Horse*****, 1821. Ink on paper, 170 x 335 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 2. Carle Vernet, *Horse and Grooms*, 1800s. Ink on paper, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 3. Horace Vernet, *The Artist's Studio*, 1821. Oil on Canvas, 52 x 64 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 4. *The Wounded Cuirassier*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 358 cm x 294 cm, Musee du Louvre.

Figure 5. Horace Vernet, *The Wounded Trumpeter*, 1819. Oil on canvas, 72.5 cm x 83.5 cm.

Figure 6. ***Trumpeter of the Hussars*****, 1819. Oil on canvas, 72 x 57.2 cm, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.**

Figure 7. Horace Vernet, *The Lancer Sentinel*, 1816. Ink on paper, 30.8 x 23 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

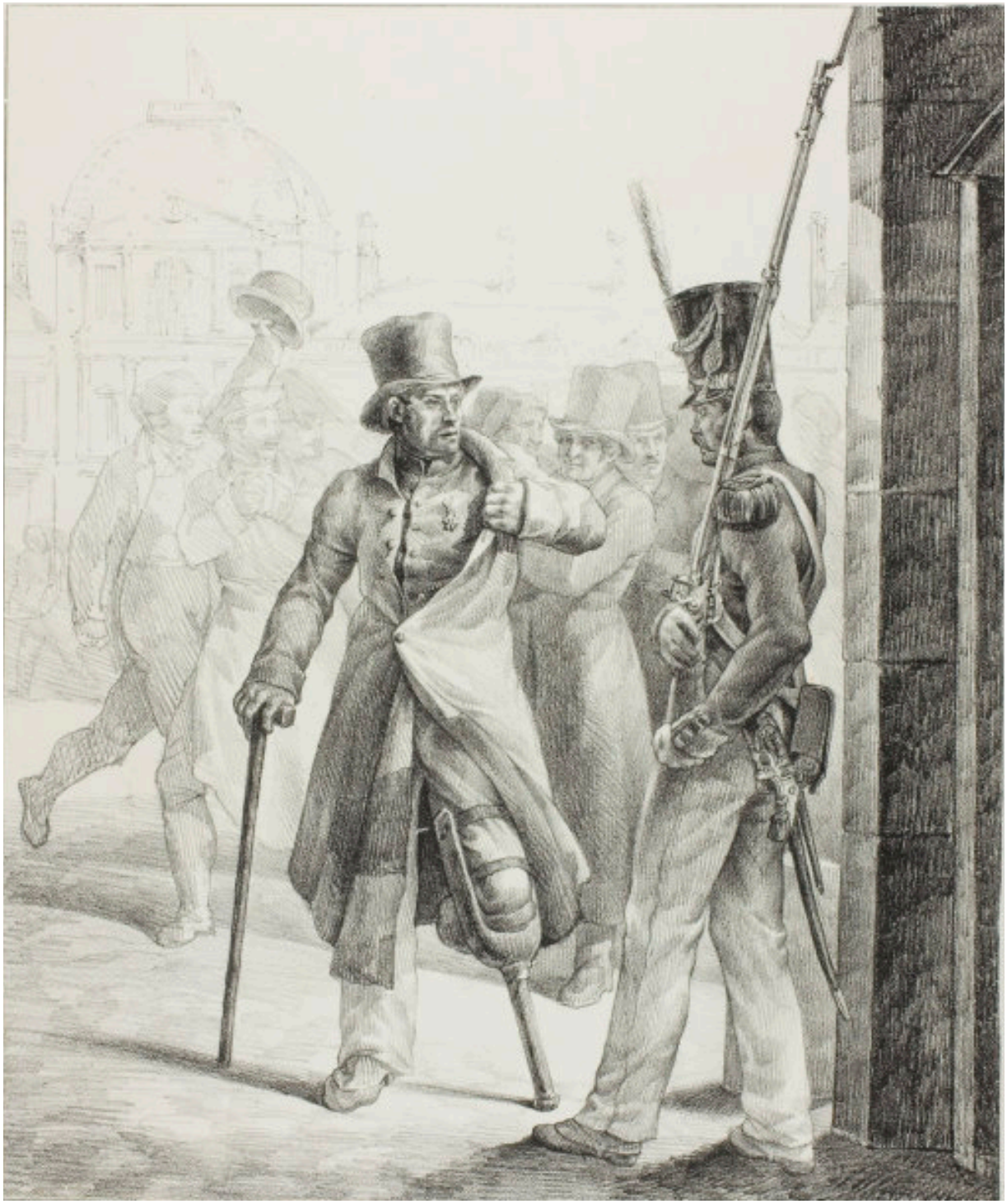

Figure 8. ***Swiss Sentry at the Louvre*****, 1819. Ink on paper, 397 x 330 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 9. ***Butchers of Rome,*** **1817. Ink on paper, 170 x 243 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 10. ***Horses Exercising*****, 1821. Ink on paper, 294 x 414 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 11. ***A Party of Life Guards*****, 1821. Ink on paper, 274 x 343 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

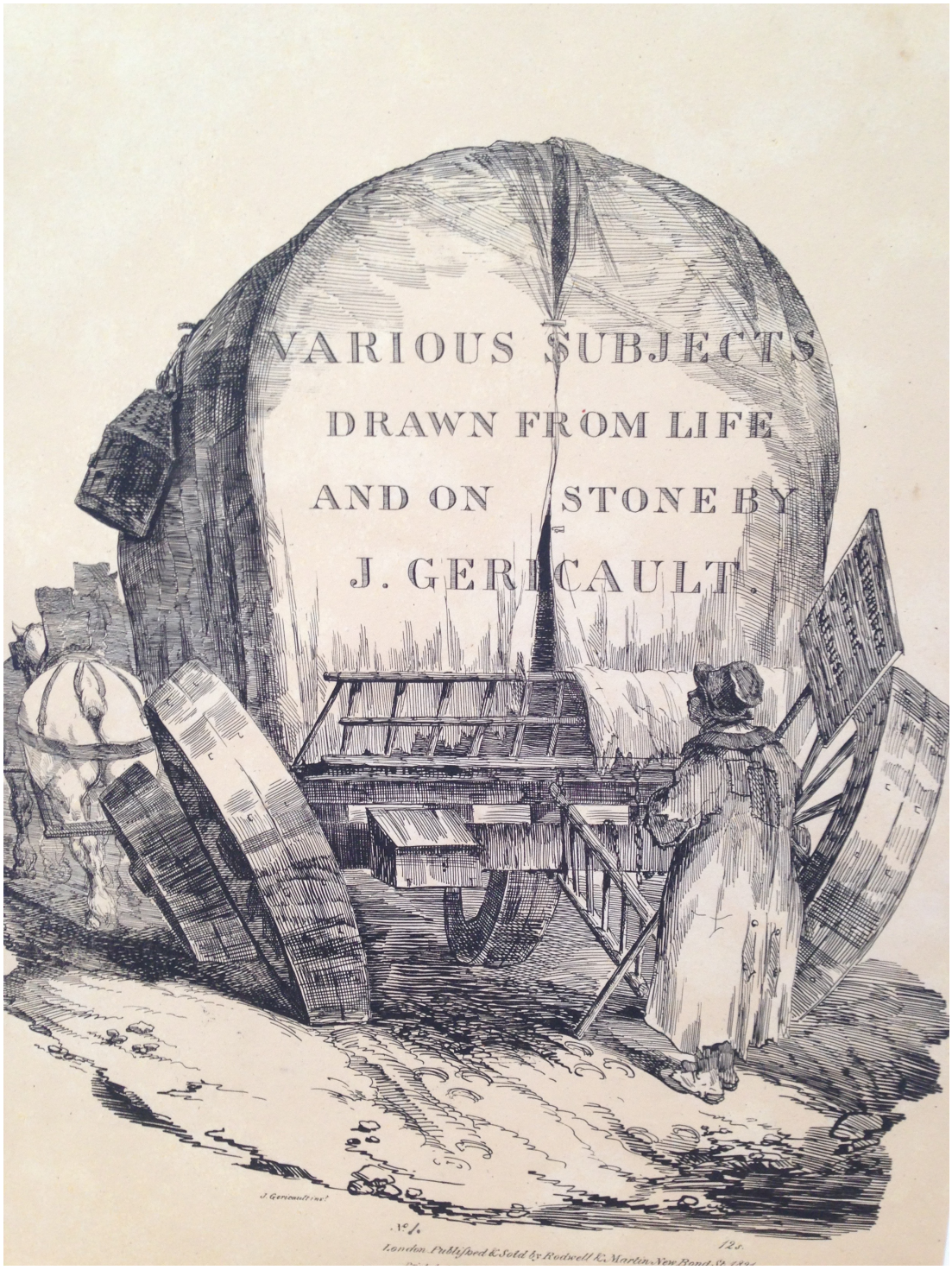

Figure 12. *Frontispiece*, 1820. Ink on paper, 314 x 231 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.

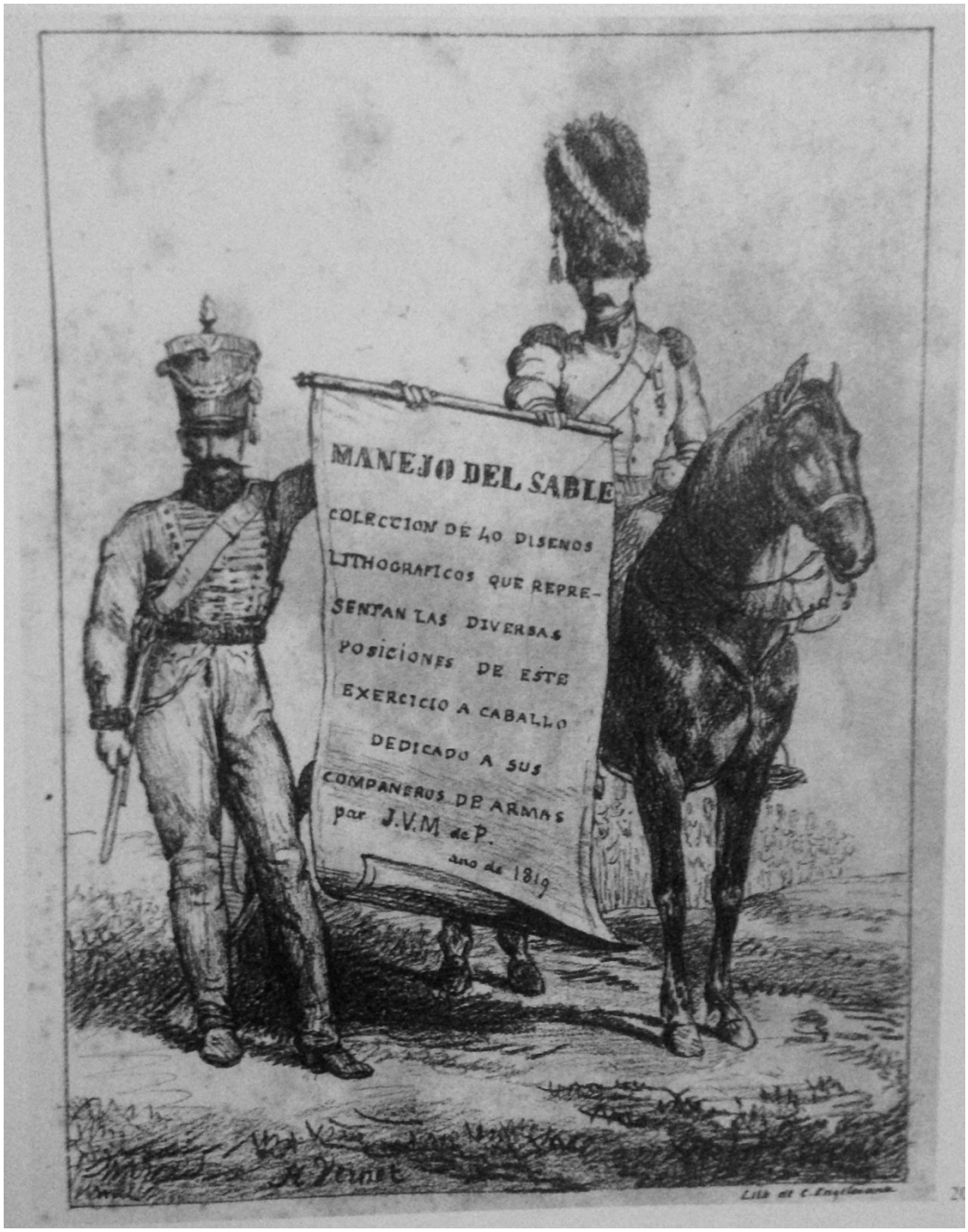

Figure 13. Horace Vernet, *The Handling of the Sabre: Frontispiece,* 1819. Ink on paper, Private Collection.

Figure 14. ***The Coal Wagon,*** **1821. Ink on paper, 193 x 310 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 15. Horace Vernet, ***Mail Coach,*** **1818. Ink on paper, 331 x 509 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 16. ***A Paraleytic [sic] Woman*****, 1821. Ink on paper, 226 x 317 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 17. Horace Vernet, ***The Convicts*****, 1820's. Ink on paper,31.2 x 42.8 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art.**

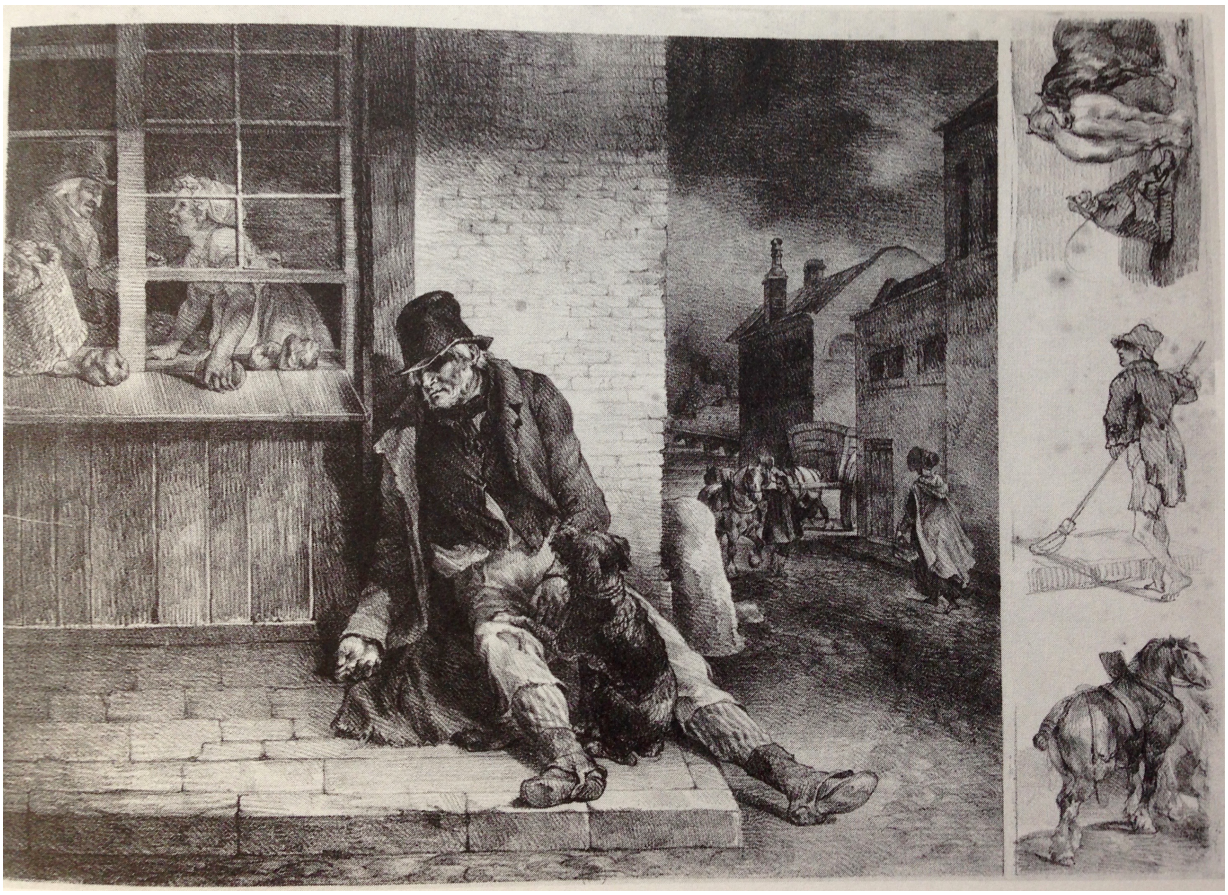

Figure 18. ***Pity the Sorrows of a Poor Old Man Whose Trembling Limbs Have Born Him to Your Door*****, 1821. Ink on paper, 315 x 374 mm, Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

Figure 19. *The Piper*, 1821. Ink on paper, 313 x 233 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.

Figure 20. ***Horses Going to a Fair*****, 1821. Ink on paper, 254 x 356 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 21. William Hogarth, *Second Stage of Cruelty*, 1751. Ink on paper, 35.7 x 30.5 cm, British Museum.

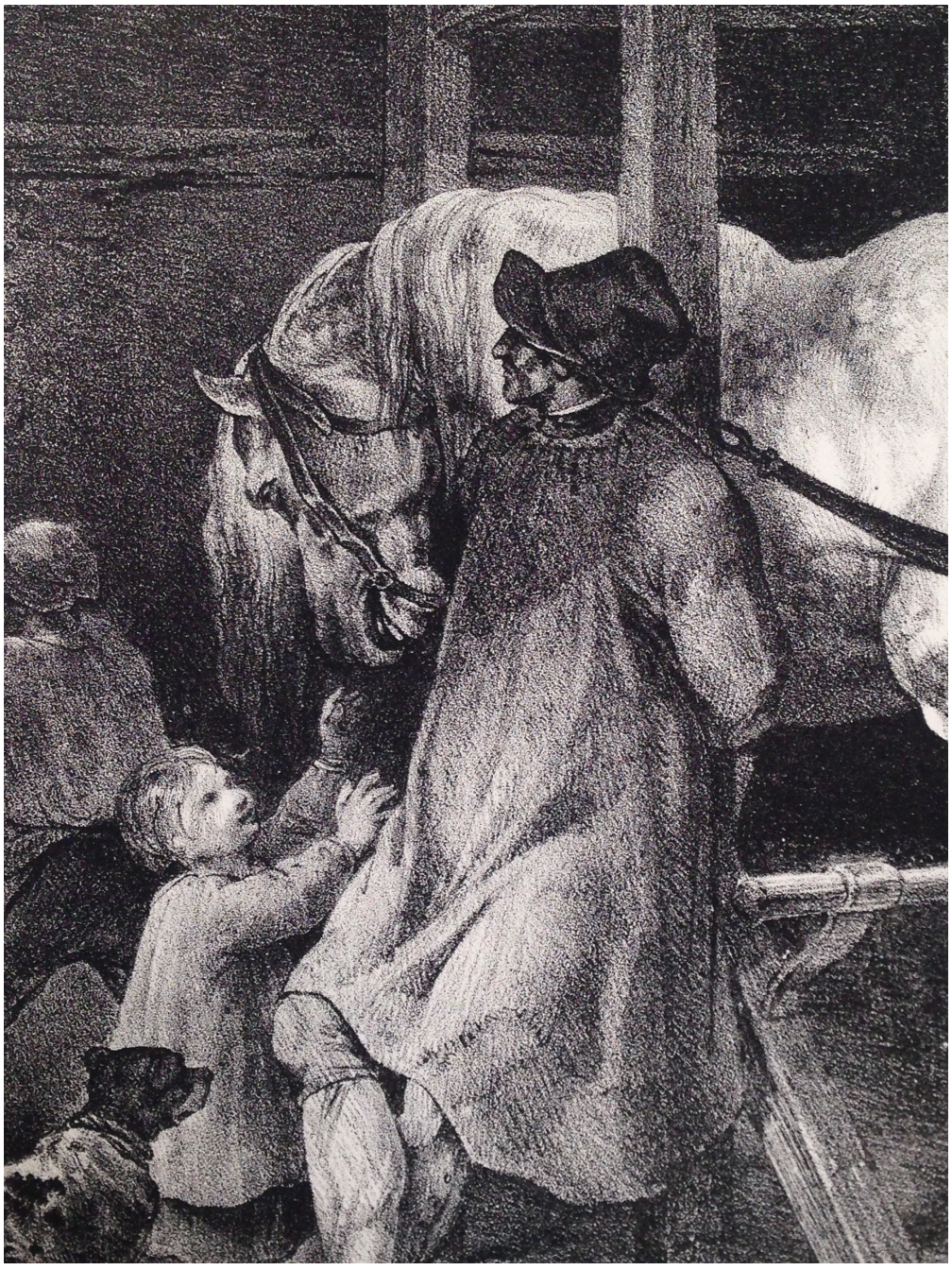

Figure 22. *The Flemish Farrier* (Detail), 1821. Ink on paper, 228 x 315 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.

Figure 23. ***The English Farrier*****, 1821. Ink on paper, 280 x 370 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

Figure 24. ***A French Farrier*****, 1821. Ink on paper, 328 x 421 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.**

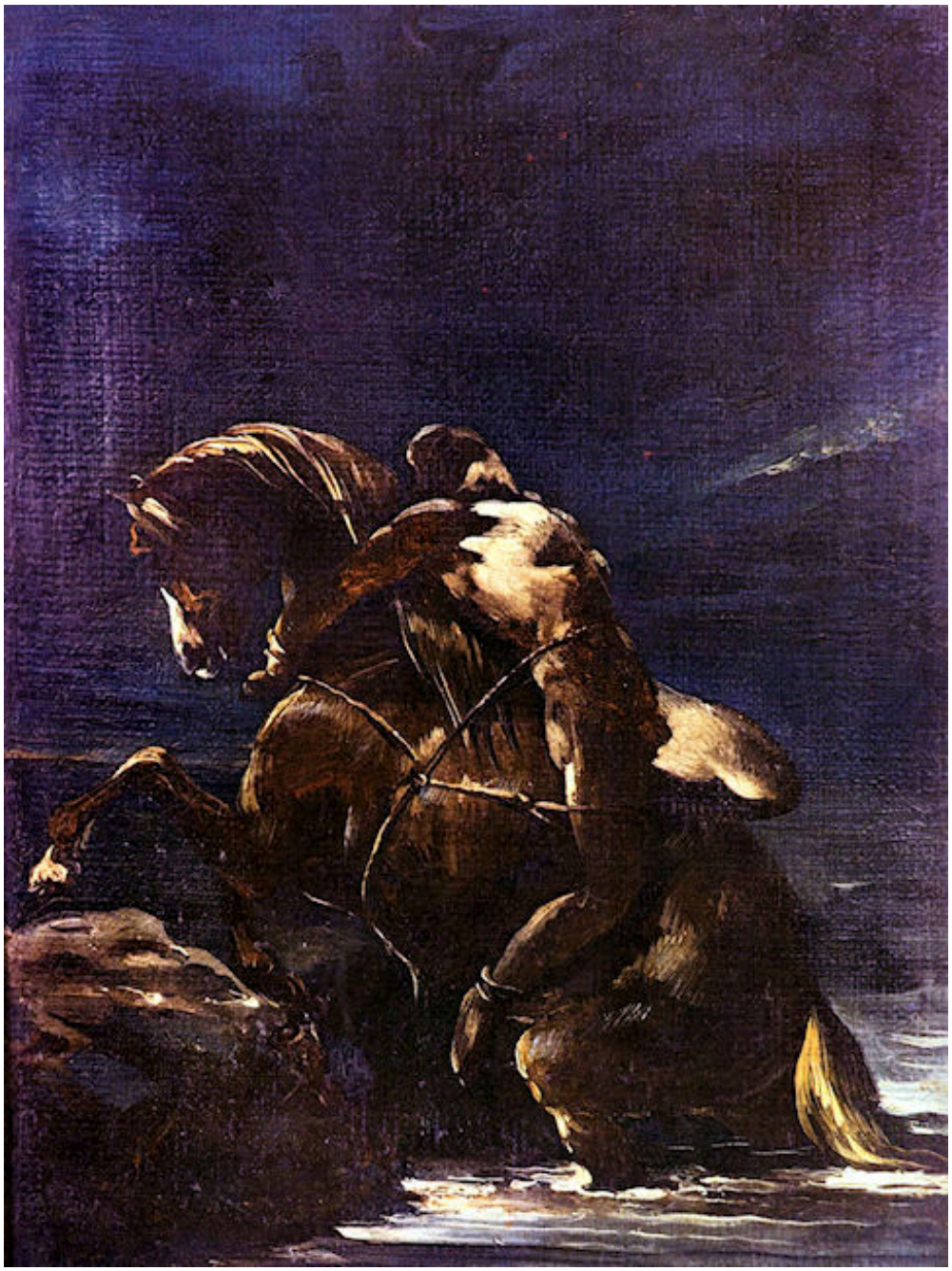

Figure 25. *Mazeppa*, 1823. Oil on paper applied to canvas, 28.5 x 21.5 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 26. Horace Vernet, *Mazeppa and the Wolves*, 1826. Oil on canvas, 97 x 136 cm, Calvet Museum.

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